

David Kerr

📅 Wed, Nov 02, 2022 10:34AM ⌚ 1:01:38

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

gang, people, money, newark, drugs, problem, job, big, parole officer, recognition, addicts, heroin, street, seventh avenue, parolees, day, drug trade, addiction, nicotine, police

SPEAKERS

Robert Curvin, David Kerr

- R

Robert Curvin 00:10

Recording now, David, why don't you just say, you know who you are?
- D

David Kerr 00:15

Do you want me to close that?
- R

Robert Curvin 00:16

Want to close it. Yeah.
- D

David Kerr 00:17

Uh Mary? Yes. Do you want to close that door? Okay. Oh, you wanna maybe send my call? Because otherwise the phone will ring 14 times.
- R

Robert Curvin 00:35

Okay, Dave why don't you just say who you are and that we're doing this for educational purpose voluntarily.
- D

David Kerr 00:43

Yes. My name is Dave Kerr head of Integrity House. And I understand this is for educational purposes. And this is voluntary on my part.



Robert Curvin 00:54

Dave tell me a little bit about your background where you grew up where you went to school and and how you got to this place, doing this wonderful work on behalf of men and women who are in need of support and guidance and counseling.



01:20

Well I hate to say it, but it's almost an accident. I mean, my life, I lived in Verona, my life. Wonderful mother and father went to the Verona school system, went on to Lehigh University, and then went on for my Master's at the New School for Social Research. And, you know, when I got out of Lehigh 1964, I went and looked for a job. And there was a job opening in the...at that time the Newark News for a parole officer, state parole officer in Newark. And so I applied for the job got the job that was in 1965 right after. And so as as a parole officer I got, that was my beginning to understand the issue of drug addiction. And in fact, in November of 65, I met Lloyd W he was a champion, boxer. He was a brilliant artist. He lived at 55 West Runyon Street in Newark, and he was a heroin addict. And in his own mother, Mother's words, he was Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde could be magnificent, and then he would succumb to the drugs. So right there that's stopped me in my tracks. How can this guy do so much Golden Gloves champion and had his had his pictures at the Montclair Museum of Art. And had shows, brilliant. And yet, how could he try to wind up destroying it all with drugs and his heroin, heroin habit. But that's the nature of the addiction. So Lloyd actually came to me for help in in that November day.



Robert Curvin 03:28

You were still a parole officer?



David Kerr 03:31

No, at the time I had left. No, at the time I met Lloyd I was still a parole officer. And that was in November of 65. I stayed with parole until 68. And so Lloyd was the first and then I noticed, maybe half of my parolees on my caseload were drug addicts, heroin addicts. And at that time, they were doing the cocaine and heroin. They'd mix them together and shoot it up. There was a alarming issue, alarming problem in the late 60s of heroin addiction, just an explosion and no one knew what happened. But really, it didn't seem like too many people were concerned about it until it hit the white suburbs. And at that time, there was kind of an electrifying response by our federal government at the time, and by the City of Newark, and the states, and we wound up getting involved in drug treatment as as a country, we realized that was support. I really still wasn't I didn't intend to do any drug treatment or whatever, but in 1968 I started a storefront for addicts, former addicts that were formerly my parolees. And we got together kind of a club. We went different places in Belleville, had the storefront and then we, we would travel to the shore we it's kind of a social club. And at the time I was trying to do my master's thesis. I was trying to had left parole. And anyway, long story short. I was unemployed and involved with a lot of my former parolees, and that's kind of how it started. I had some uncomfortable experience too at Colonnades where I met a young man who said to me, he was a drug addict. And he was a parolee not of mine, but I recognize and he was also a member of the Barons, which were though the Barons and Condors were warring gangs here in this area, by the way,

Lincoln Park, Newark at the time. So anyway, he was talking to me and I said, Well, gee are you straightening it out, and I was gonna give him some some deep meaningful counseling, after which he said, Give me all the money you have. And I'm looking at him like. Now, this is a big guy, with a little little cross in his ear that signified his gang. So I gave him all the money I had wasn't, wasn't a lot of money. And he thanked me and walked away. And so that was my first experience as kind of a gentlemanly exchange, where I kind of willfully donated money, for reasons of my own health. And I never saw him again. But I do know is his gang, and I followed the gang here and so on. But at any rate, I was. I left parole, I was unemployed. And then I started working for the state. For a little while, until I founded Integrity. And starting Integrity was an accident, really, I, I had met several people like this gentleman up there by the Colonnades, and they all needed help and they needed housing. So at that time, my cousin Rich was joining me in this effort to try to help people his his thing was, well, what can we do and he had expertise in real estate. So he found 45 Lincoln Park in 1969, October of 69. We lived with my parolees there for a while. And eventually, I got a call from Dr. Lauria from UMDNJ. He says, we have an NIH ____ grant, do you want money for your program? I said, what program I'm living with drug addicts. And now I'm finding half of 'em are still getting high. He said all the more reason maybe you could create a program and help them get off the drugs. So it was really, really more of a halfway house at the time. Just yeah, you know, living and actually we were heating the house with wood. And there was no heat, all the pipes were broken. The guy that owned it was a rum runner of all things. And he gave us this house while all the pipes are broken. And so we we stayed there for a year with an old eventually with no heat. Well, it was it was we had some fires in the fireplace and that kind of thing. And event and we split it right out in the backyard split wood and I had split wood I was into splitting wood and heating with it. That was the era of the woodstove. 70s Well, eventually, we did get heat and that was in December of 69. And then we also at the same time applied with the UMDNJ University Hospital for for money for starting a program. And there were there were five other programs part of this including Mount Carmel guild. And, lo and behold, we did get the funding, I had to raise \$10,000 toward the match. It was \$32,000. 10,000 came from the Victoria Foundation, Howard Quirk since deceased, but they were very much part of the starting of Integrity in addition to Don Laurie and those two guys were critical. And all of a sudden I you know here we are funded for drug treatment. And I still didn't know anything of what to do. I knew one thing I wasn't doing much good. Because they were nodding out and Richard was beside himself because all this donated furniture we got in there was found (with) cigarette hole burned in the top all over. And then there were uncomfortable instance, where there was some aggressive behavior and some threatening. And at that time, a lot of the street addicts from Seventh Avenue. The Italians came in and they had they were part of this kind of gang.

R

Robert Curvin 10:42

So you had a racial division built into the population.

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David Kerr 10:48

Actually, at the beginning, it was all white from the gangs from Seventh Avenue. And there was misbehavior, and they settled it through one of them just slapping like that. On the face. Just, I can tell you that I don't want to tell you the names. But these are hardcore gang members at the time, I didn't realize it. Matter of fact, I used to go on Seventh Avenue. That was my, you know, the Columbus homes a little east of that Seventh Avenue was where all the action was

with drugs. So naturally, I figured let me go there and try to get these guys off of drugs. Meanwhile, I didn't realize I'm risking my life because normally I would have been shot. I'm not I don't belong in that neighborhood at all. But they the gang. The Italians had a contract. Anyone who laid a hand on me would get shot. And I didn't realize that know that till several years later. So they were protecting you at the same time they had a contract to have to protect me. And the one guy Larry J. I'll just say he had murdered 10 people. He hadn't got arrested at all for this. But all his comrades knew this. So I was with. He said that I was a lamb among wolves. He would say that. Now he had hepatitis C at the time and there was no cure. And so he died of that. But he was a ferocious, angry fellow, but not with me, fortunately. And it was interesting times at the time, he gave money to his friend who was crippled Sambo who ran with him to the Cancer Foundation. It was a little bit he was kind of losing it. So Sa- and it was over here we were living at 45 Lincoln Park, so Sambo runs over with the money over here to cop dope. Larry doesn't know any better. Sambo comes back and says, "They've mugged me for the money. I lost the money." Well, Larry says "Well, then we're gonna get every one of them." So Larry gets a whole herd of people living with me in 45 Lincoln Park to come over to Ticheneor and Pennington, to go house by house and find the perpetrator of the robbery, and meanwhile I'm there looking like this in a suit and tie and all of these rabble rousing roughnecks banging on and they're white, they're Italian, in a black neighborhood. Keep in mind right after the riots or the rebellions of those four days in Newark in 67 they had a whole bunch of bad feelings about white folk in this area. And there they are, pounding angrily on doors. And with me there trying to clean it up and tell it tell the homeowner that this is not going to evolve into anything dangerous, even though it looks like it would. At any rate I had several experiences like that. And matter of fact, the first night we moved into the house at 45 Lincoln Park, Richard and I moved in

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Robert Curvin 13:58

This is your cousin?

D

David Kerr 13:59

Yes, my cousin Rich. I looked out the window I hear yelling and screaming. I looked at two ladies are fighting at a knife fight with each other. And I turned the window open and I said stop that, which they did. Because they looked at me like maybe he's I don't know who they thought I was law or something like that. But they stopped it and move quickly away almost arm and arm there was no and and close the window and we proceed to continue with our TV dinners at the time. And so I don't want to regale you with incidents but I got mugged six times and Richard probably double that, gunpoint knifepoint

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Robert Curvin 14:43

In the area?

D

David Kerr 14:44

Right around this area. I was trying to finish my master's thesis, it was 1974 I got a My Little Rambler and it was a Wednesday night And suddenly I feel this You know something pushing

hambler and it was a Wednesday night. And suddenly I feel this. You know, something, pushing in my ribcage. I turn around and the guy says, "Give me your money."

R

Robert Curvin 15:05

You're in the car already?

D

David Kerr 15:06

Yeah I'm in the car. So I'm not arguing. So I went for the wallet he thought I'm going for a gun. He rammed the barrel of that gun right in my ribcage said, "You make one more move, you're a dead man." I said, "I'm trying to get my wallet out." He said, "Okay". I took awhile, I gave him \$34. And (?)...then he gets in his car, I'm going out there with a pen and I'm taking his license plate, which I submitted to the police without much results in my head. But in any event, those kinds of things were pretty much a regular diet, groups we had that would erupt into violence. There was not there was yelling, not physical violence, but it was my fiancée, I used to come down here and we met right at 303, 306 Washington Street, the United Way. At that time, that was where we were, we would meet and things happen. You know, that was, as you well know, you were on the streets yourself. Listen, this is not a time. It's not healthy. And particularly if you look like me. But fortunately, I didn't run into some serious problems, although there was some quick. There was one incident with Richard he was he was approached by three Bandidos. And they told him, "Give me your money." So they were pretty tall, big guys, and Rich is little shorter and he's very fast. So as soon as they merged on him, he shot out and was gone before they knew where he went, they had arms they had gun-- knives. Those days was more knives than --

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Robert Curvin 16:56

More knives than guns yeah.

D

David Kerr 16:59

And I would, I would be in these groups, where I was only white guy in new groups, and it was very uncomfortable. And, and I tried to confront them about their drug behavior and what they're doing wrong. And they saw at all more of a racial thing. It was, so it was uncomfortable and I pursued it. We kept moving on. Plus, they knew I was a parole officer, and they thought I had the long arm of the law behind me or whatever it was, but

R

Robert Curvin 17:34

But you were not still a parole officer at the time? You're out. So why did why did you? Why did you stay in this? I mean, what what really gripped you -- made you so resolute.

D

David Kerr 17:52

I just go back to Lloyd Wright. And he's just one of literally hundreds and then hundreds of thousands maybe men and women with his desperate look and the talent, that need help. And then the irony of all this is the help that I gave them was through themselves. It started like I said, I have to tell you the truth. I don't know anything. I don't know anything about drugs. I went to school, but I don't know, school doesn't teach me anything. What you're seeing on the streets here, this is not this is not taught in school, not at Lehigh, not the New School. So you have to help me. And they did. They said you know, your too caring. That's what they told me. He said, You gotta you gotta distrust (us?). You can like (us?), but don't trust us. They can told me that. And I took it to heart. And I remember when my first parolee over there, his name was Carl since died of liver disease just a few years ago, but he made real well, he was one of the first guys came in. And he told me says, "You know, I'm gonna get a job", and I help him get that job. And what's the first job he gets it's in with a jewelry store. I said, "How can they trust you?" And he said, Well, they don't know. I said, Well, how did you account for your five years in prison? He said, Well, I was in California. Oh. So I said, Let me tell you this. When you get paid, I'm taking all your money and you're not getting a nickel till I decide you need it. He agreed with that, okay. And I said on top of it, I'm following you in your car. When you go back and forth to work. Which I did for awhile because I took them literally don't trust them. So I followed him to work. I didn't follow him home but to make sure he got to work. I took his money when he got the money, all these things he let me do. And so he and several other recovering people, by their own actions taught me what I should do and what I shouldn't do. And I learned kind of in that way that I still love. I love people I love, there was a bunch of gangs that came in here from the SOS. And they were angry young men and reminded me of the 60s. One most angry was the last guy couldn't have been more than 19-20 Big Baby Huey, big guy. And they all march, almost in sync. Well they were coming to our academy for a meeting that I called, in a group that I started called the Council, which is gang members. Well the last guy come in, I said, "Excuse me, could you tell me what you do (now?), in your gang, because I know you do good. And I appreciate your coming here to talk about the good things you do." And I said, "I just want to praise and thank you, for you're doing what you're doing in a positive way." So he's looking at me, and I said, "and furthermore, I need to express my love for you." And I gave him a big hug. Well, meanwhile, his four gang members had turned around by that time watching this whole thing. And while I'm hugging he's receiving (?) the hug, he's like "ehhh". And they're watching and everyone started laughing. It broke the ice. And I said, "In all seriousness, I do love you. But you got to learn to love yourself." And that's one of the things we had talked about. But meanwhile that that was in my efforts of touch base with the gangs and see what they (????), and see whether that kind of thing. And it turns out that it's universal. They don't like to be hugged. Maybe they don't like it. But they'd like to be recognized, they like recognition.

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Robert Curvin 22:13

Now out of this experience, has their evolved, what one might call an Integrity house model of recovery or?

D

David Kerr 22:25

Yes we in I was very careful about documenting what I've learned. The the phrase is a therapeutic community therapeutic community was started in England in the early 1900s. And then in the mid 40s, by by a guy by the name of Max Jones. It's kind of a, an offshoot of the

Oxford movement. In the early 1900s. The therapeutic community was pretty much the heart of what we were doing. I wrote a definition for the TC in 1981 that was adopted nationally and worldwide. And I issued 10 competencies of what you should do if you want to run a therapeutic community, make a long story short, what the therapeutic community is, every part of our community has to be therapeutic. That means what they do in the dining room or their shenanigans out in the park or their clapping, everything they do has to be to their recovery, in a therapeutic sense. And on top of it, it has to be done by themselves, the staff are coaches inspirers, but the therapy, that counseling is done by the residents, or we call student members, students of learning and members of a family. So the concept of the self help therapeutic community is very much tuned to the person who is in the program, and it's up to him or her to take responsibility for his or her own life and to change things. So all I did is create a model. And then we refined it and then keep refining. We just had another refining of it recently. And the whole point is that our student members have to take hold, take charge of their lives have to feel kind of empowered to do something. And if they ask for help, I said I can't give you any help. And I had an incident this happened broke through one of the guys broke through the offices and got to me, which I tried to make myself available but I mean he he manipulated and got in here. He wanted find out from me, basically he wanted to get out early, but he was asking me all those questions about, "What how can you help me? I came here I'm here for three months and I had gotten any help." I said, "That's very sad." He said, "But can't you help me? You're the you're the head of this thing. Could you give me some words of advice and some help?" I said, "No, I couldn't." He said, "But don't you know," he said, "what the treatment is and how you could treat me and how I could get into recovery?" I said, "I don't know anything." So now he's like, "What? Why is he saying this?" I said, "Now I'm gonna tell you what to do." I said "Turn around, leave this office. Think about what I said. Because in saying what I said, I gave you the total answer. You come back now in two days. And tell me what the answer is to the question you want. Not the question you're trying to manipulate me to get out. But the question of your help." Well, however, he got the answer, he probably talked to people. But he came back and he gave me the right answer. He says, "I gotta do it. I can do it." Good. Let me ask the broader question of well, how many agencies or support systems exist in the City that are doing is essentially what you're doing? I mean, there might be some revision or alteration in approach and style. But how much support is there city wide for this kind of for this kind of problem? Well, there are two other agencies that come to mind. And then they're harm reduction models, methadone maintenance that kind of thing.

R

Robert Curvin 26:48

Mm-hmm.

D

David Kerr 26:50

But to give you an example, of the need. Our waiting list, and we clean it up, we go over it all the time. Our waiting list is well over 150 right now.

R

Robert Curvin 27:06

100.

D David Kerr 27:06

Trying to get in.

R Robert Curvin 27:08

How many do you have in the program?

D David Kerr 27:10

In the program at any given time about 340.

R Robert Curvin 27:13

About 340? So you got 150 waiting.

D David Kerr 27:17

waiting to get in.

R Robert Curvin 27:18

And the other facilities probably are comparable in terms of size and?

D David Kerr 27:25

No. Well, ours is 340. There's one is primarily for Hispanics, they have I think 80 beds

R Robert Curvin 27:35

that CURA?

D David Kerr 27:36

CURA. And then Renaissance-

R Robert Curvin 27:37

How many do they have?

D

David Kerr 27:38

They have I think something like 80, 80 beds in Newark maybe more in Secaucus, though, and then Renaissance has for boys. I don't know, maybe 50 or 60 beds, something like that. But again, the problem out there, and then the problem right now in Newark in 2011 is that the drug trade, drug dealing is the supplier income for many people. You have a whole trade now called drug dealing it's done usually by the Big Bad gang leaders. So now, the gangs become a business model for

R

Robert Curvin 28:26

Entrepreneurship?

D

David Kerr 28:27

Yeah. And then I go in there, and I say, Well, I just got a grant and, and we can give you a job. Well, how much you pay? Well, that's gonna be about \$7.50 an hour. Now, and then they look at me, this is chump change. I said, well, I realize that you can make more money in other ways. But let me ask you this, how long you've been out of state prison. And the guy told me he's about three weeks. I said during your five year bid, how much money did you make every day? He said, I hear I hear what you're saying. I said if you stick to what, step by step, and that's why we have turtles all over this, have this Turtles all over this office...

R

Robert Curvin 29:05

It's a slow process.

D

David Kerr 29:06

It's a slow patient process. You know, you're making \$7.50 an hour, but if you keep at it, you can earn more and more money. But they don't want to hear that they want \$200 a day, \$500 a day and that kind of thing. So it's hard to deal with.

R

Robert Curvin 29:23

Is that generally what they make on the street corner peddling?

D

David Kerr 29:26

Yeah, but unemployment in Newark is 15%.

R

Robert Curvin 29:30

R Robert Curvin 29:29

15% right.

D David Kerr 29:30

So now, you look at that. And then our guys, what's your background? Well, I'm five years in southern state, two years at Northern State of got time yardville, you know, and I'm a drug addict. Could you hire me? And now he's lucky he's getting \$7.50 an hour and yeah that's chump change. Meanwhile, the guy's got his connections ready his cell phones moving. And he's got his whole network back. And it's a capitalistic thing and he's making money And because it's so lucrative, you get challenges to territory. And then someone gets shot and then the gangs compete. And now we have Latin Kings, the Bloods the Crips. But people don't realize this is as much an economic, capitalistic situation with drug dealing being the top moneymaker. And then they're competing, going to the, you know, employment center to get a job at \$7.50 an hour if they're lucky. So it's a whole culture in the city. And we're not alone.

R Robert Curvin 30:41

But, you know, some years ago, some people did some research on the drug trade in Washington, DC, you probably are familiar with this study that indicated that a lot of the high income that people talk about, really did not exist, that the income was actually much less. And the risks were just as high as everybody realized. So I don't know how true that is. But it's not, it's not all of them that are making big bucks, right?

D David Kerr 31:18

But they have panache, they have a way. They imprison, they talk big, and there are some gangs and they can do anything. And the biggest thing that an addict needs his recognition. Not even money recognition. And I always sensed that, and I gave him that kind of recognition. That's probably why I was successful starting. They don't even need as much money as much they need recognition. But money is recognition, and all the blame that goes with it, and they're driving around.

R Robert Curvin 31:52

When you go to a party among middle class professional people, what's the first thing they ask you? What do you do? Right? And so there's, this is a whole population of people who have no answer to that question. Right?

D David Kerr 32:10

And they've learned over the years if they survive to manipulate and know how to answer that question or exaggeration or lies whatever. And then their whole lifestyle becomes one of virtual reality, or whatever you want to call it. They're not really tuned in. When I tell them \$7.50 a day, they they laugh. You know, they're not tuned into the real world, because they've been

supported by and then they get this, they wind up getting a hot car and driving around. And, and they have great exultation for about six days, until they get shot at or arrested on some charge, or they get in a fight or whatever. And they lose it all. But they but they dream this dream for five days for them, this recognition is so critical. And that's one thing we miss I think in dealing with gangs and dealing with addiction, that if we could offer that kind of recognition. Here's an example. And I'm trying to do this get the gang leaders together say, Look, I don't know what to do. And this the same scenario that was painted in 60s with drugs, I don't know what to do. Could you help me? What what help do you want?, they say. Well, look, I don't want to see you guys get shot in the head. I don't want to see you guys die. They will agree with that. They don't want to see them die either. But then they'll go on, "But if someone wants to mess around-" Okay, fine. Could we could we work some kind of system where you might be able to help others, instead of pulling them in your gang? Could you gang be put to positive use? This is right here and now what we're trying to do with several gang members, to give them the recognition, to encourage and coach them into saying, "Look, could you attempt a peaceful coexistence with society and we'll in return, try to work with you and you can help there and you can help try to get these kids in school, rather than your gang or both. They could go on your gang but keep the school and try to teach them peace." And it's an interesting bizarre reaction. But I am getting some interest by some leaders, there's a problem in different cities. I was in Orange last- a couple of weeks ago and they have some serious gang situations there. And they've got some it's kinda same with same type of conclusion. Let's get the leaders in. And let's try to talk to them about what can we do together. Our mutual goal is no one want to get killed. That's a mutual goal. No gang leader really will say I want to get killed. They try to get the bravado and all that, they're not afraid to death, I'm only gonna live to 25. I can tell you guaranteed, that's a line, they do not want to be killed. But the bigger thing is, they don't want to be embarrassed, humiliated, or that. So now how can we work on the recognition and positive direction for these leaders? We can't possibly pay them \$200 A day or \$500 a day? You know, and

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Robert Curvin 35:53

Well, let me let me ask this because, again, again, I I'm a, an outside observer of this whole phenomena. But it seems to me that there are three maybe points of failure in this system that gives a young person virtually no alternative. One is the failure of the schools, that once these young folks are having extreme difficulty, and maybe even to be fair, it's it's a weakness, you might say, or a failure or a disarray at home. Then there's the failure at school. And then there's adulthood and no work. And to me, that's the that's the path to a life of criminality of some kind.

D

David Kerr 36:59

You might add one more thing when they do when they do go home, most of them somewhere to go home to. Usually there's no father.

R

Robert Curvin 37:09

There's no father,

D David Kerr 37:10

There may be a mother and there probably is a grandmother. But when they get home, they usually get yelled at, name called, beat up by their caretaker (?). Why did you come home so late? Why are you always doing this? You never getting a job, you quit school, you're no good. And this is beat into them, out of frustration..

R Robert Curvin 37:31

Yeah.

D David Kerr 37:32

Of the gradma or the mother.

R Robert Curvin 37:34

Or the caretaker.

D David Kerr 37:35

Yeah, because there's just no end to the frustration. And then stuff goes missing from the house. Or the apartment building. So it's just a frustrating. So you

R Robert Curvin 37:48

When you say stuff goes missing they're, they're taking stuff to sell.

D David Kerr 37:52

They take stuff, the first thing they'll do is rob their apartment building or whatever like that. That's the first thing.

R Robert Curvin 37:57

Close to- something close to them.

D David Kerr 37:59

Something safe no addict wants to go out and get caught stealing something. And no one wants to hurt someone really, most of them don't. Gang leaders really don't want to hurt anyone either. But don't disrespect me. If you disrespect me, I will hurt you. So you know, but

anyone either. But don't disrespect me. If you disrespect me, I will hurt you. So, you know, but at home. The real problem is, in my opinion, ages eight to 14, eight year old to 14. That's it by the time they're 14, 15, 16, they're out, they're - they're all done. You- you can't really tell me, you could do drug prevention on a 15, 16 year old child in the city of Newark, or maybe anywhere, they're already grown up, they've got their network, they've got the friends, their gangs and so on. They're situated, they might be making some money, for you to say. By the time they're 14 or 15. 14, or 15. They're beyond. Now, this is not my idea. This came from meeting with many gang leaders. The gangs work with a 10 year old 12 year old, 11 year old, maybe even the nine year old. That's the ones they want to recruit. Because those youngsters are malleable, they're open. They're all willing and they want recognition from a male. And there he is. And he's a big bad guy.

R

Robert Curvin 39:34

Driving a fancy car

D

David Kerr 39:35

He drives, but he loves me, he loves me. That's another thing about gangs they show love in their own strange way. They show toughness and love you know, and it's not looked down upon to that. So the kids, not all the kids but this portion of kids respond to that. And they wind up joining a gang. The one guy one guy I was talking to recently is SMM. Sex money and murder, or something like that. Now, what kind of a name? Why would you? Why would you create that name? Sex money murder? Well because you want people to think you are big, bad, and ruthless? What kind of an image? Do we have a society allow? Or understand? How can we even understand that, but a whole bunch of people flock to this game because of recognition. And, uh, yet if you talk to the gangs, they won't be shot. You know, they don't, they don't do this to get shot. But they're very upfront about here's our territory. And it's like territories too that's another thing.

R

Robert Curvin 41:03

Why why is, I mean, again, this is only the impression you get from reading about these things in the paper, which are always I come out of journalism myself, as you know, and there's always a reality that's quite different than what you read. But what it what it sounds like, or what it reads like, is that many of these guys though, while they don't want to get shot, they are very quick to take up arms and go after other people that they feel are threatening them. So while there may be kind of a myth about their own devaluing life, they value life for themselves, but do they value life for the community? And for other people?

D

David Kerr 41:54

They don't value it and they don't devalue it, they don't think that far. They think self preservation and recognition, join our gang, we have territory, and quite frankly, if you get sent to the state prisons in New Jersey, probably other other states too, you better join a gang, you better join something.

R

Robert Curvin 42:14

To protect you

D

David Kerr 42:15

Protection. And it's the same in the street, you come out in the street, you're part of a gang and protected. Meanwhile, in the papers, you read about who got shot, this gang, that gang, all that stuff, which seems like those gangs are violent, which they are anyone who shoots people, they they shoot people out of who What are you looking at?, type of thing, not. You know, and it's very bizarre, but my belief is like with addiction in the 60s, I have to really understand them, before I can, you know, offer any kind of alternatives. And from what I understand right now, the drug trade is pretty much the source of the the money and their businesses is the drug trade. Unfortunately, they don't have the ability to continue it beyond the point because they usually get someone gets arrested or whatever. Now, if you talk to the Director of Police, they'll say they're called in to a neighborhood up on the Hill, whatever West Ward, South Ward whatever. And they break up a gang --- situation. Well, I mean, they can see clearly, there's maybe eight or nine perpetrators. But there's 40 kids or young men usually involved. And these 40 young men, they see them, but they know and they talk to them. They don't want to arrest them. They want to try to help them. And I've talked to the Gary McCarthy (????) demand. I mean, could we take a band, and before you book them, these lesser criminals, get them down here and let's sit down just talk. Let's let's let's it's kind of a pre drug court approach. And this is on the drawing boards. We're not really there yet. But the idea of working together when people are endangering others, and there's an arrest needed. But the police see beyond that and say, well, we can arrest and book all these people, we don't have the space for them. And they're just going to turn around and do it again. Unless we can figure out some other alternatives. The idea being that we could do a pre drug court where they'll arrest them. They'll hold off on the booking, they'll take him here or somewhere else. We work on a program and if they do the program, they won't book. That's a thought anyway, give them some assent(?) in sentence

R

Robert Curvin 45:06

Let me let me go back to the the steps of of disconnection from the larger community. Family is key schooling, and at the absence of work. Would a public works job program where anybody that showed up at any day of the week who says I'm I want to work today. And whether it's sweeping the street, or helping to clean up a sewer, or cutting grass and a playground or whatever, or in the park, would that make a difference?

D

David Kerr 45:55

That would be a great idea. But it probably won't work.

R

Robert Curvin 45:59

What's the

why not?

D

David Kerr 46:00

I'll tell you why it won't work because and we've tried this over the decades. There have been many job offerings, federal dollars coming into this city job availability. And in the,

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Robert Curvin 46:14

I'm thinking of something like the CITA, remember the old CITA

D

David Kerr 46:17

And then you get, I mean, Al Coffee (?) was telling me that, you get a guy ready. Once a job is coming in, and you put him in the job, he doesn't even show up. It's Monday, where is he? Tuesday comes he shows up at 11 o'clock in the morning, for a nine to five job. So here's the problem. They jobs are essential. But you have to have people to work in the jobs. And while unemployment is 15%, what who of the 15% is ready to work from nine to five for \$7.50 an hour, they have never done that. And if we think that we can solve the problem, by just here, if we have the jobs, they will come. And yet every gang member will tell you, we need jobs. But when the job is there, they don't realize they don't understand that work is hard. You got to get there on time. Forget about what to work, you've got to be there. They haven't learned that that part of the equation. Job for \$7.50 an hour that's chump change. I'll come in when I when I please.

R

Robert Curvin 47:32

How do you get how do you get a an individual just like take one person who has experienced the worst of this path? Family, no help, no supervision, no discipline, schooling, no effects, no impact. And then you get to a point where then somebody says, Okay, you can go to work. How do you deal with, the stuff back here?

D

David Kerr 48:05

First off to take the huge area of addicts, on the streets, a lot of people on the street doing stuff addicts and and they really have to be given the opportunity for treatment. And so if you say, well, you can have a job, but you got to get treatment first. I'm not paying for treatment, I'll take my chances on the street, they say. So now law enforcement comes to mind. The Attorney General, the Department of Corrections, the state police, the local police, county sheriff, all have to converge with encouraging words, to say, "No, you you will work or you will be going to jail. Because we've given these opportunities, you're on probation now. We've extended and you just and we even have provided a job for you. Now, if you if you can't if you can't take that opportunity, then you got to do some more time think about it in jail." Now my position on that is that the interim step would be treat them help them if they have mental health problems if they have whatever. But the help that they give really needs to be kind of mandated for this

guy because they don't have any. It's like the--- if they had a family with a father that had expectations of his child. They would have that kind of culture and behavior that when my dad says something I go ahead and do it. They don't. They have the behavior that if there's an opportunity arises, they're going to be in charge, and they'll do what they please and they're definitely not doing what this guy says unless they're forced.

R

Robert Curvin 49:53

Right, let me ask the real the real complicated question. What would legalization do to this problem? So you remove the incentive, and the money, or at least reduce the impact of the money on the trade

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David Kerr 50:14

Legalization would would give more money to legal vendors to maybe put into help centers and agencies. But it would miss the whole point. Because now you've made it easier, addiction is a gripping disease. And if you make it easy to continue that disease, it will continue. So legalization

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Robert Curvin 50:41

and expand

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David Kerr 50:42

will give every opportunity for the disease to grow, expand and develop. And more and more people are using the free clinic. You have culture now the culture is important now in England, in the 60s, they had legal heroin and all that. But you had a situation where the bobbies walked around without a gun, come along, we're going to prison or whatever, okay. It was very but in Newark, and in this country. No, no, you know, people aren't cooperative you gonna to try to arrest somebody you get a fight. And then you have to pull a gun if you, you stop your fighting, I'm gonna shoot you in the head. It's not a compliant culture, certainly here in, in big cities like Detroit Watts Newark and different cities. So if I were to, I mean, to try to turn this thing around, you really have to maintain if drugs are bad for people, maybe they should be illegal. Now, a good example, if you look at the legal drugs, Oxycontin, hydrocodone, Percocet, and on and on. How does that work? It's the biggest exploding epidemic at this country way beyond the 60s heroin. And it's in neighborhoods of people that look like me. A lot of women, and we're getting them here at integrity.

R

Robert Curvin 52:08

You are?

D

David Kerr 52:09



David Kerr 52:09

From Bergen County, from Sussex County, from Warren County from Hunterdon County. We're getting women in with a pill problem. Serious addiction. And guess what, after a while, where they manipulate five doctors to give them these painkiller medications that are highly addictive. They can't afford it any longer and the doctors get wise and the pharmacists do. So guess what they start going for? Heroin, heroin is the drug of choice once again, even in 2011. For people who can't get any more money for painkillers, and they go to the street drug, now what happens? They have to go on the street to get the heroin is not you can't go to a pharmacy, give me some heroin. Give me some cocaine. So now you've turned middle class person, upper middle class into a street addict. Or what have we done with legalizing the drugs so legalization or making them illegal for that matter. I don't think really is, is the answer. But I certainly wouldn't make heroin legal. Marijuana, you know, you can you can make a case where it's not as addictive or whatever. But now there's studies out



Robert Curvin 53:31

Well you see that most of the people in the country think marijuana should be legal should be legal, because most of the people in the country, or I guess a large number of people in the country use it.



David Kerr 53:41

And there's there's a strong thing with a larger number use cigarettes. There's been a recent study about nicotine. And with mice, have taken nicotine in their water. And there's a significant likelihood that the mice who drank nicotine later on will go to cocaine will be more attracted to cocaine. The assumption is and there was a study of humans as well, not in that regard, but they studied the tobacco use. And they easily found that most tobacco users are much more inclined to go on to other drugs, not only marijuana but c- snorting coke and coke and heroin and that, you know, so there's a significant correlation between tobacco use nicotine and continued drug use. It's biologically the actually identified the DNA. It's called FOS B and it's the little DNA that gets mutated when the early nicotine use and causes molecular change in the DNA that makes a person more susceptible to further use going forward. And they they've they've identified it goes with cocaine. This, by the way just came out National Institute of Health. And this study was done at Columbia University.



Robert Curvin 55:08

Let me let me ask another tricky question. This is again, I mean this, when we talk about this problem, where it's not Newark, just Newark, it's Cleveland, Detroit, Miami, to some extent, Washington DC. It's a huge urban problem. And in the case of Newark, which has been talking about this, this renaissance for years in my discussion with a lot of people inside and outside of Newark, many people feel that the one thing that Newark has yet to be able to show any real progress on is murder, and murder in the Newark contexts and in the Detroit context, and Cleveland, etc. is very much related to this competition, and conflict that we're talking about. How do we get to this problem? This this problem of violence and death, which becomes almost a a symbol of what urban life is today?



David Kerr 56:30

Well, I mean, it's a \$64 question. Yeah. I don't agree that the urban areas now house the most addicts because of the explosion of the painkillers in suburbia and yeah, probably more unreported addiction and deaths.



Robert Curvin 56:45

But you don't you don't have the formation of, of middle class housewife gangs?



David Kerr 56:51

No, you don't



Robert Curvin 56:51

in the suburbs.



David Kerr 56:52

Now, the good news is that in the urban areas,



Robert Curvin 56:55

maybe the doctors could form--



David Kerr 57:00

are unknowingly writing these scripts.



Robert Curvin 57:04

Absolutely. They are a big player in this.



David Kerr 57:06

They are working New Jersey has some excellent work under Lori Griffith DCA, and Tom Calcagni (?) with prescription drugs and regulations and so on. New jersey is moving definitely in the right direction. But in the urban areas, one good thing is that the kind of perpetrators of the problem, the drug dealers are all now wearing colors. You know we see them these are the Red Hat guys, these are the blue hat guys. And you kind of have a uniformity to them and a

look to them. And also they have turf that they hang on. So it becomes easier for law enforcement to locate some problem areas. Not saying they can't just jump in because someone's wearing a red hat. But they can keep surveillance. So I think the problem in urban areas, unemployment would probably go down. If the people would learn how to work. It's not as much the jobs aren't available, although I would say right now, we take guys and keep them in the program for a year plus and they still can't get a job. So unemployment is a big problem.

R

Robert Curvin 58:22

They're ready to go to work but they can find a job.

D

David Kerr 58:24

They're ready exactly. And you don't want to put some guy right off the street wearing a red cap they'll say yeah I'll work that job, you know, for three, four days until make another score somewhere else whatever. Job Readiness is a critical piece to the equation. Changing the and hope, on the streets there is hope needs to be hope that someone's listening to us. So I think looking at it flip side, the glass half full. We have these kind of cadres of young men usually wearing similar clothes, staying in similar parts of real estate, even proclaiming that is their turf pretty clearly. They're marking their spot. It's an ideal situation for the police and law enforcement to move in. And to give a opportunity. Say for no arrests. If you guys go here. And-

R

Robert Curvin 59:30

Now I'm sure you know about this program in North Carolina or I guess it's North Carolina high point or someplace where the police did exactly that. They kind of they worked with the community. They identified all of the parties, the relevant parties, the dealers, the the distributors, and so on. And they call the community meeting and set and said Look, we know who you are. And we don't want to put people in jail. We don't want to break up families. But we want to stop this. Could that kind of thing?

D

David Kerr 1:00:12

Yes, it can. That's exactly yeah, exactly what we should be doing. We should be breaking down the hierarchy, the police agency people like myself, church leaders, basically. But you can't do it in a glorious summit. It can't be anything glorious, like a big meeting, or something has to be little pieces of help coming in. For two or three people here and four or five there. It has to be a coordinated effort. But it I don't like the concept where everyone meets in an assembly to talk about something that half the people when they leave, maybe aren't gonna buy it. You want to hear from the leaders of the underworld, whatever you want to hear from them and give them a part in, in focus and hold them to their action plan. Say we want an action plan. Tell us and then they say where are we going? No, no, no, we, you know, just like a corporate exec, you gotta be challenged. You say now that that doesn't make sense to me. Tell me what it is that you want the police to do, you want (agencies?). To get out of town? That's above (unintelligible)

